

Serial No.: 10/712,729

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Reply to Office action of December 29, 2005

AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please delete the abstract as filed and replace with the new abstract, hereinbelow. **Applicant notes that the paragraph is a new, replacement paragraph and therefore no underlining is included.**

A system for sintering a quartz tube is provided. The system comprises a furnace for heating the quartz tube in a controlled atmosphere, a support rod assembly for the quartz tube, and means for positioning the quartz tube and a portion of the support rod assembly within the furnace. The support rod assembly includes a cylindrical support rod and at least one retaining portion coupled to at least one end of the cylindrical support rod. A mandrel assembly for fabricating a quartz fiber optic sleeve tube, a method of making a quartz fiber optic sleeve tube using the mandrel assembly, and a quartz fiber optic sleeve tube are disclosed.